

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method comprising:
 - 2 enabling, via a web site hosted by a third-party payment service, a sender party to arrange for shipment of a package to a recipient party via a shipping vendor;
 - 4 interacting with an online facility hosted by the shipping vendor to facilitate the shipment; and
 - 6 facilitating, via the third-party payment service, payment from the sender party to the shipping vendor for the shipment.

- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the arranging for the shipment of the package includes:
 - 3 serving a first set of web pages including one or more web pages to a client operated by the sender party via which the sender party may enter shipping information;
 - 6 passing the shipping information entered by the sender party to an on-line interface provided by the shipping vendor;
 - 8 receiving shipment data generated by the shipping vendor in response to the passing of the shipping information; and
 - 10 providing the shipment data to the sender party via a second set of web pages including one or more web pages.

- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein data is passed between the third-party payment service and the shipping vendor in the form of XML (extensible markup

3 language) documents, and the on-line interface comprises an XML application
4 program interface (API).

1 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the shipping information includes send to:
2 address information that may be entered by the sender party via a corresponding
3 web page.

1 5. The method of claim 2, wherein the shipping information includes send from:
2 address information that may be entered by the sender party via a corresponding
3 web page.

1 6. The method of claim 2, wherein the shipping information includes send to:
2 address information that pertains to an address registered with one of the shipping
3 vendor or third-party payment service that is automatically retrieved from a
4 database.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the payment of the shipment is facilitated by:
2 providing the payment from the third-party service to the shipping vendor; and
3 deducting a shipping cost of the shipment from a third-party payment service
4 account held by the sender party.

1 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the payment from the third-party service to
2 the shipping vendor is facilitated via a debit/credit card authorization/settlement
3 network.

1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the payment from the third-party service to
2 the shipping vendor employs a virtual debit card.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing a computer interface via
2 the third-party service that functions as a proxy to enable a user to obtain a shipping
3 account with the shipping vendor.

1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising serving data to a client computer
2 operated by the sender party to enable the sender party to print out a shipping label
3 pertaining to the shipment.

1 12. The method of claim 1, wherein an arrangement of the shipment and payment
2 to the shipping vendor appears to the shipping vendor as if the sender party is
3 directly accessing on-line facilities hosted by the shipping vendor.

1 13. The method of claim 1, further comprising enabling the sender party to view
2 tracking information related to shipment of the package via the third-party payment
3 service.

1 14. The method of claim 11, wherein the third-party payment service enables the
2 sender party to view tracking information by:

3 automatically navigating, via a proxy operation, to a web site hosted by the
4 shipping vendor and entering a tracking number; and
5 directing a web server hosting the web site to send a tracking summary page
6 generated in response to entry of the tracking number to a client computer operated
7 by the sender party.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 tabulating shipment purchases for each user over a predetermined period;
3 and
4 preventing a user from arranging further shipments if the tabulated purchases
5 over the predetermined period exceed a predetermined purchase limit.

1 16. A system comprising:
2 a web server; and
3 an integrated shipping server, linked in communication with the web server,
4 the web server and integrated shipping server comprising software
5 instructions that when executed enable a sender to arrange for shipment of a
6 package to a recipient via a shipping vendor by performing operations, including:
7 generating and serving web pages via which shipping information
8 pertaining to the shipment may be automatically entered and/or manually
9 entered by the sender; and
10 interacting with an on-line interface hosted by the shipping vendor to
11 arrange for shipment of the package via the shipping vendor through use of
12 the shipping information;
13 receiving shipping data pertaining to the shipment from the shipping
14 vendor, said shipping data including data corresponding to a shipping label;
15 and
16 generating and serving a web page via which the shipping label may
17 be printed.

1 17. The system of claim 16, further comprising a payment server linked in
2 communication with the integrated shipping server and comprising further software
3 instructions that when executed perform the operation of facilitating payment for the
4 shipment from the seller to the shipping vendor.

1 18. The system of claim 17, wherein the system is configured to be operable by a
2 third-party payment service for which the seller has an account, and facilitating
3 payment of the shipment comprises:

4 providing payment from the third-party service to the shipping vendor; and
5 deducting a shipping cost of the shipment from the seller's third-party
6 payment service account.

1 19. The system of claim 18, wherein payment from the third-party service to the
2 shipping vendor is facilitated via interaction between the payment server and a
3 debit/credit card authorization/settlement network.

1 20. The system of claim 19, wherein execution of the software instructions further
2 performs the operations of:
3 generating a virtual debit card; and
4 employing the virtual debit card to pay the shipping vendor.

1 21. The system of claim 16, wherein execution of the software instructions further
2 perform the operation of performing a proxy operation to enable the seller to obtain a
3 shipping account with the shipping vendor via interaction with web pages served by
4 the web server.

1 22. The system of claim 16, wherein execution of the software instructions further
2 perform the operations of:
3 storing a tracking number corresponding to the shipment that is received from
4 the shipping vendor;

5 automatically navigating, via a proxy operation, to a web site hosted by the
6 shipping vendor and entering the tracking number; and
7 directing a web server hosting the web site to send a tracking summary page
8 generated in response to entry of the tracking number to a client computer operated
9 by the seller.